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Title:

Press statement - Education - National Survey of Educational Needs

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PRESS STATEMENT

4/3/71.

FROM: THE PREMIER (MR. DUNSTAN)

"The South Australian Government viewed with considerable alarm and dismay the failure of the Commonwealth Government to take action on the 1970 National Survey of Educational Needs," the Premier (Mr. Dunstan) said today.

He said that education and State-Federal financial relations had reached such a critical stage that he intended as a matter of urgency to list education needs and Commonwealth inaction over the Survey at the April 5 Premiers' Conference.

"It is a disgusting situation for Australian parents, who have a right to expect that national leadership be given in what is a national education emergency."

Mr. Dunstan said, "The National Survey of Educational Needs was instituted in 1969 by the Australian Education Council in collaboration with the Commonwealth Department of Education and Science."

"It was designed to achieve a searching investigation of all capital and recurrent expenditure needs of primary and secondary education, and teacher training, for the 1971-75 five-year period."

"The results were submitted by all States to the Commonwealth Government in May 1970".

"Since then the Commonwealth has done nothing except hedge, duck, parry, and evade."

Mr. Dunstan said that teachers' organisations throughout Australia were despairing over the situation and that this had been forcibly pointed out to him and the Minister of Education (Mr. Hudson) yesterday by the National President of the Australian Teachers Federation, Mr. W.A. White.

Mr. Dunstan said, "The Survey's results revealed a financial gap of more than \$1440M. between what the States could provide in the five years and what would be needed to achieve reasonable progress in improving education standards."

"The South Australian gap was \$200M.

"Following its frugal adjustment last year in taxation reimbursement to the States, the Commonwealth said it would not make any additional provision for recurrent expenditure on education."

"The Prime Minister argued that the new formula would enable the States to meet their own needs in the area, which was and is both incredible and absurd."

"The immediate rise for this financial year in State revenues following the new formula in fact will mean only a marginal increase for the remaining four years of the 1970 reimbursement formula."

"The extra money will not even begin to meet the dramatically increasing needs of education which the Survey outlined."

Mr. Dunstan said that for the South Australian Government one of the most disturbing aspects of the situation was the Prime Minister's clear indifference to education and the growing financial needs of the States.

"On the 16th of October last year I gave the Prime Minister at his request a detailed account of the State Government's attitude towards the Survey and what we could do from our own resources to meet our educational needs."

"I did not receive a reply to the letter for some three months, until the end of January this year, when the Acting Prime Minister wrote to say that some States had still not replied to the Commonwealth request for further information."

"This may be still the case, but if so, the apparent lack of concern, not just at Commonwealth level but also among some other State Governments on the whole question of national education needs, is a matter for grave disquiet.

"Before the 1969 Federal Election the Prime Minister undertook to enter into discussions with the States on how the educational services would be financed as soon as the Survey was completed."

"The Survey was completed ten months ago and while it demonstrated

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a very wide area of extreme need in schools which required dramatic action then, the situation requires even more immediate action now."



PRIME MINISTER,

CANBERRA.

23 JAN 1971

27 JAN 1971

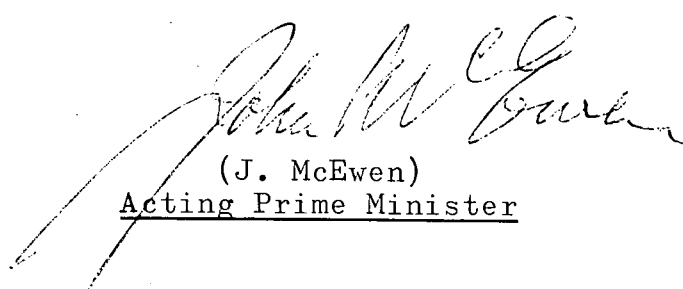
Dear Mr. Dunstan,

I refer to your letter of 16 October in which you commented on the reaction of your Government to the results of the Nation-Wide Survey of Educational Needs, and thank you for the information you provided.

I am sure you will appreciate that before the Commonwealth's position on the Survey can be determined, we will have to take into account the reaction of those State Premiers who have not yet replied to Mr. Gorton's letter, as well as the further details of needs which are being sought from State Ministers of Education and independent schools by the Minister for Education and Science.

Unfortunately it may still be some time before the Commonwealth has all the information it requires. However, I can assure you that the views you have expressed will be borne in mind, and a further reply will be sent to you as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely,


(J. McEwen)
Acting Prime Minister

The Honourable D.A. Dunstan, Q.C., M.H.A.,
Premier of South Australia,
ADELAIDE. S.A. 5000

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E.D. 16/1/126

16 OCT 1970

Dear Mr. Gorton,

I am now in a position to reply to your request (7.9.70) for the South Australian Government's reaction to the results of the Nation-wide Survey of Educational Needs of Government Schools and Teachers Colleges for the years 1971 to 1975 (inclusive).

My Government does not agree that it will be in a position to meet the recurrent expenditure needs for education for the period 1971 to 1975 as revealed by the survey. Indeed, it is expected that over the whole period there will be a significant gap between what is needed according to the survey and what can be provided from South Australia's own financial resources. As a consequence, my Government rejects your conclusion that "the new arrangement for general financial assistance grants for the next five years should enable the States to meet priority needs for recurrent expenditure in education as revealed by the Survey".

It is true that this financial year my Government has been able to make a more satisfactory provision for recurrent education expenditure. The proposed increase for the Education Department is 14.7 per cent. However, this figure does include an inflation component which is closer to 10 per cent than the 5 per cent annual rate envisaged by the survey. It is doubtful, therefore, whether the rate of real improvement envisaged by the survey will in fact be achieved in South Australia this financial year.

It is agreed that the improved percentage increase for education in South Australia this year is partly a consequence of the higher than normal percentage increase in the tax reimbursement grant for South Australia. However, you will appreciate that the percentage increase in the tax reimbursement grant this financial year incorporates both a slight revision in the formula and the effect of the rise in the base to which the new formula is applied. For the remaining four years of the five-year agreement, if a "normal" escalation of costs occurs, the percentage rate of increase in the tax reimbursement grant to South Australia will revert to a figure much closer to the previous rate of increase than to the increase provided this year.

Under these circumstances, it is expected that South Australia will not be able to provide the rates of increase envisaged by the Survey for the latter four years of the agreement. This conclusion is reinforced when consideration is given to the expected heavy recurrent commitments which are arising in a number of other areas, especially hospitals.

The rejection by the Commonwealth of the case for additional aid for recurrent education expenditure so soon after the submission of the Survey, forces my Government to the conclusion that the Commonwealth has not considered properly this aspect of the States' submissions.

On the capital side my Government has provided for a significant increase in the provision of State funds this financial year. The planned provision of State funds this financial year for school buildings, teachers colleges, etc. is \$2,800,000 (approximately) in excess of the amount proposed last financial year. This increase is approximately 25 per cent, but some of the increase is taken up in providing for items, e.g. teacher housing, which are not covered by the Survey.

My Government expects that in normal circumstances over the next five years, it will be able to increase provisions for school buildings, etc. from State funds by a percentage rate at least equal to the overall percentage increase in loan monies. Our ability to exceed this minimum percentage rate of increase may be limited by the heavy forthcoming provisions which must be made for hospital buildings, and for buildings for tertiary institutions under the matching grants arrangements. It is clear that whatever assumption is made about the provision of State funds there will be a very large gap between what we can provide and what is needed.

It is the firm view of the South Australian Government that Commonwealth assistance for both recurrent education expenditure needs and capital purpose, is necessary if a satisfactory standard of education is to be provided for the 86 per cent of school children who attend Government schools in this State.

So far as independent schools are concerned, my Government will continue the payments of \$20 per capita for secondary students and \$10 per capita for primary students. In addition, a further \$250,000 has been allocated for 1971 for independent primary schools. This is to be allocated on a needs basis by a Committee comprising representatives of independent schools. The Committee has been asked to categorise independent primary schools and apply rates per capita for schools in each category. You will readily appreciate that our ability to provide further assistance in this area is limited by the lack of adequate funds for Government schools.

Yours sincerely,

PREMIER.

The Rt. Hon. J.G. Gorton, M.P.,
Prime Minister,
CANBERRA. A.C.T. 2600.

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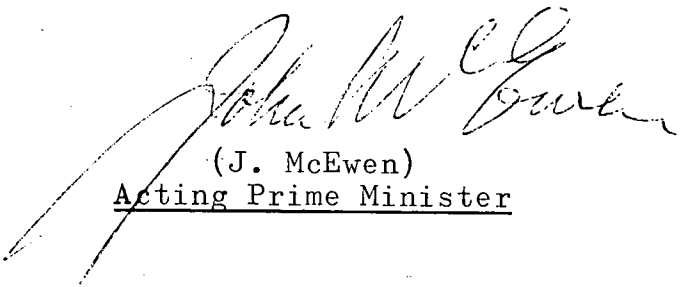
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